

## Written evidence submitted by The Royal Society (IB13)

### Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination Bill: Public Bill Committee Evidence Submission

## Background

### 1. UK Science and Immigration

Scientific research and innovation is essential for UK jobs, health and wellbeing and improving quality of life for us and people around the world. It is made possible by the ideas, knowledge and creativity of talented individuals from the UK and overseas

COVID-19 has demonstrated, perhaps as never before, the importance of the UK's science base and the need to ensure it remains strong and supported.

Research and innovation is global. Around **one third** of academic staff currently working in our higher education sector come from outside the UK<sup>1</sup>.

For research and innovation to continue to thrive and effectively support our economic recovery, the UK needs an internationally competitive immigration offer to ensure talented people from overseas continue to contribute to our world-leading science and help us grow.

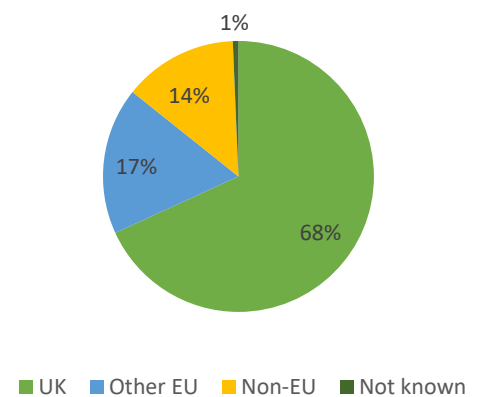
As negotiations over the UK's future relationship with the EU continue, science needs an outcome that ensures UK and EU scientists can continue to work in each other's countries with minimal friction, bureaucracy and cost.

The UK must also demonstrate it is a great place to do great science, and a welcoming place for people around the world to choose to bring their specialist skills, once it is safe again to do so.

### 2. Our Position

The future strength of UK science, and the benefits it can continue to create for the economy and society, depend on developing home-grown skills and attracting international talent to come here and contribute. We need an affordable, fair and efficient visa system to achieve this and we need to send a clear message that we welcome talent from overseas.

Nationality of UK Higher Education Academic Staff



Source: [HESA Statistics](#)

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/23-01-2020/sb256-higher-education-staff-statistics> (2020)

While positive steps have been taken, such as the new **Global Talent Visa**, more work needs to be done to ensure the UK remains competitive with other world-leading science nations.

### Global Talent Visa

The Royal Society has been successful in working with the Government to develop the new **Global Talent Visa** entry route (GTV) which went live on 20 February 2020. This immigration category allows talented and promising individuals in specific sectors including research and innovation to work in the UK for up to five years without a sponsor, language tests or other restrictions such as a minimum salary threshold. Applicants must instead gain an endorsement from one of six endorsing bodies engaged by the Home Office, one of which is the Royal Society. The GTV is a welcome and important first step towards creating the visa system that we need for attracting global scientific talent. As one of the endorsing bodies, the Royal Society will work with the Government to further expand the route ahead of wider changes to UK immigration in 2021.

### 3. Visa Costs

By ending free movement, the UK will become less accessible to highly skilled EEA migrants who can work or study elsewhere in Europe without a visa. If the costs and burden of entering the UK are perceived to be too high, it will be other countries that benefit from the transfer of knowledge, expertise, and investment.

In terms of upfront costs, the UK is between four and six times more expensive than other leading science nations for obtaining a visa<sup>2</sup>. This places the UK at a disadvantage when it comes to attracting scientific talent:

Country and Visa Category	Total Upfront Cost
Japan - Researcher Visa	£0
Spain - Residence Permit for Researchers	£64
S. Korea - E3 Research Visa	£99
Netherlands - Researcher	£145
Australia - Temp Activity Visa - Research (408)	£154
Australia - Research Student	£154
Sweden - Residence Permit for Visiting Researchers	£160
Germany - Scientific Visa for Researchers	£170
Italy - Research Permit	£207
US - J1 Research Scholar	£258
France - Talent Passport - Researcher	£313
India - Research Visa for all levels	£608
UK - Tier 1 Exceptional Talent (replaced by Global Talent Visa in February 2020)	£2,760

The Royal Society is urging the Government to look at reducing the costs and burden of entering the UK to ensure that the country remains an attractive place for international scientific talent.

The UK must choose an approach to immigration that enhances our science base and drives our economy, jobs and international competitiveness. If the talent goes elsewhere, it will be the UK's loss.

<sup>2</sup> Royal Society (2019) UK science and immigration: why the UK needs an internationally competitive visa offer. Costs accurate as of 2019. UK figure relevant for Exceptional Talent visa at that time.

#### **4. Recommendations:**

- The costs of obtaining a UK visa for study or work should be in line with our international competitors
- Applicant and sponsor costs that are calculated on a 'per year' basis should be spread over the duration of the visa rather than payable in full upfront, so they don't pose such a barrier to entry.
- The cost of bringing family members into the UK should be minimised in line with international standards
- The UK should seek visa-free study and work arrangements with other countries to reduce the sponsorship burden on employers
- Continued improvements should be made to visa processing times as part of the UK's plans for the future immigration system
- Visa extensions should be light touch and fast.

For further information on any of the above issues please contact [public.affairs@royalsociety.org](mailto:public.affairs@royalsociety.org)